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# FIGHTING A PHILOSOPHY

BY WILLIAM ARCHER

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## I

SOME people who profess to know Germany well are trying to make out that the temper of the ruling caste has not been influenced in any considerable degree by Friedrich Nietzsche. They point out that Treitschke, whose influence has certainly been enormous, would have nothing to say to Nietzsche, whom he trenchantly described as "a madman, bitten to the marrow by the *folie des grandeurs*." They prove that Nietzsche repaid the Professor's contempt with interest. They show without difficulty that Nietzsche's writings abound in sentiments which cannot be pleasing in high quarters, that he was no flatterer of the Hohenzollerns, and that he even, on occasion, criticized the German character and culture and disparaged the State. How, they ask, can the author of such heresies, the man who claimed the title of "Good European" in contradistinction to Prussian Patriot, be thought to have inspired the present war?

If we take the "ruling caste" in a strict and narrow sense, it is very likely true that its members are not much addicted to the study of Nietzsche. One cannot imagine the Kaiser, for instance, giving his days and nights to *Zarathustra*. Nevertheless, the exact agreement between the precepts of Nietzsche and the policy and practice of Germany cannot possibly be a matter of chance. There is not a move of modern Prussian statecraft, not an action of the German army since the outbreak of the war, that could not be justified by scores of texts from the Nietzschean scriptures. In many cases, no doubt, it would also be possible to find texts of an opposite tendency; for few philosophical rhapsodists have been more fertile than Nietzsche in self-contradictions. But the dominant ideas of his philosophy, the ideas most frequently and emphatically expressed—the ideas, in a word, that get home to the mind of nine readers out of ten—are precisely those which might be water-marked

on the protocol paper of German diplomacy and embroidered on the banners of German militarism. This is certainly no mere coincidence.

It is no doubt the case that among active politicians Treitschke has had much more direct influence than Nietzsche. Moreover, it would be an error to regard either writer as a true originator of the ideas associated with his name. They are not the causes, but rather the most conspicuous symptoms, of the modern German temper. They are co-ordinate effects of that great disaster to civilization, the war of 1870. The German people were "overtaken," as our forefathers used to say, with the inebriation of victory, and the writings of the two German-Poles reek of its fumes. Each in his own way—the one with an imposing air of stolid sanity, the other with a freakish emphasis of insanity that for some time hindered his acceptance—they constructed a theoretical justification of the practical example of triumphant force that had startled and fascinated the world. Bismarck is the true author, no less of Nietzsche's philosophy, than of Treitschke's history, Nietzsche, of course, would have denied it with imprecations, but it is none the less true. Treitschke more or less consciously, and Nietzsche more or less unconsciously, gave articulate voice to the colossal swagger in stone and bronze with which the record of 1870 is written all over Germany.

Owing to the annexation of Alsace-Lorraine—which filled even Bismarck with misgiving—it became a political necessity to perpetuate and live up to the gospel of Power. The present war is the logical outcome of the material and spiritual forces set in motion in 1871; and Nietzsche, more or less unconsciously, I repeat, had provided for the average, intelligent, uncritical public—the Culture-Philistines as he himself called them—a philosophic justification of the spiritual development. That is where his direct influence is surely unmistakable. The ruling caste troubles little about philosophic justification; but the average man hugs to his heart the philosopher's violently dogmatic asseverations, in semi-biblical rhythms, that force, rapacity, unscrupulousness, pitilessness, are indispensable parts of the higher ethics of the future. By proving that conscience, as a whole, is a despicable survival of "slave morality," Nietzsche offers a potent anodyne to uneasy consciences. Is it to be doubted that millions of Germans have recourse to this soothing drug when some trait of political or military "master morality" affects them with a momentary qualm?

It may be argued that the Germans who enlist Nietzsche on the side of Prussian Imperialism flagrantly misread him. That is possible; but the trouble is that no human being can say how he is to be read aright. To extract a coherent system from his contradictions is impossible. He recklessly flung forth wave upon wave of thought: those waves which were tuned to harmony with the prevailing vibrations of the national spirit carried their message far and wide; those which were not keyed to the right pitch were idly dissipated in space. Wherever his ideas are clear, definite, and easily translated into action, they are aggressively inhuman; wherever they stray in the direction of humanity (as, for instance, in the conception of a united Europe) they are vague, visionary, and irreconcilable with the general trend of his doctrine.

"Shall I prove to you," says Dr. Oscar Levy, who seems to be accepted by the English Nietzscheans as little less than a reincarnation of the master spirit, "shall I prove to you that a new philosophy may be a more powerful enemy than all the navies in the world?" The proof is now being attempted on a world-wide scale. Whether it will reach its Q. E. D. remains to be seen; but if not the most powerful thing on earth, the Nietzschean philosophy is certainly one of the most redoubtable.

Dr. Levy wrote in 1906. Gerhart Hauptmann, in 1914, boasts that *Zarathustra* is one of the classics which the cultured German soldier carries in his knapsack—the others being Homer, *Faust*, and the Bible. To judge by results, we may say with confidence "the greatest of these is *Zarathustra*."

Let me now show by a few quotations how strong is Nietzsche's claim to a posthumous Iron Cross of the first class, as the inspired apologist and eulogist in advance of Germany's assault upon all that the non-Nietzschean understands as civilization. My quotations shall be chosen from the four works of his complete maturity, written at a time when his ideas had attained their full development, yet before any unmistakable symptoms of insanity had set in. They are *The Joyful Wisdom*, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*, *Beyond Good and Evil*, and *The Genealogy of Morals*. As Nietzsche seldom pursued a sustained argument, but chose rather to write in staccato aphorisms, he suffers less than almost any other author by the detachment of quotations from their context. In no case, so far as I am aware, does the context of the following passages modify their meaning in any favorable sense. From other portions of his writings inconsistent and even contradictory passages might, no doubt, be

selected, but, as I have already pointed out, they are far vaguer, far feebler, far less characteristic. It may safely be asserted that the Nietzschean thought-germs which inhere and rankle are those which are barbed with inhumanity.

If we look for the key-note of the whole war, where shall we find it but in this aphorism:

The time for petty politics is past: next century will bring the struggle for World-Dominion—the compulsion to great politics (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 208).

It is perhaps worth noting that the term rendered “World-Dominion” is not “*Welt-Herrschaft*,” which might be taken in a more or less figurative sense, but “*Erd-Herrschaft*”—dominion over the earth or globe. Can it be doubted that such a philosophic-historic prophecy, reverberated a thousandfold during the past twenty years, is calculated to bring about its own fulfilment, and that millions of minds in Germany have been steeped in the idea that their racial mission was, in the next war, to secure such a rearrangement of the world

As should to all their days and nights to come  
Give solely sovereign sway and masterdom?

Now let us look for the moral arguments whereby it is declared not only permissible, but imperative, to inflict any amount of agony upon mankind in pursuit of your self-aggrandizement, or, more technically, in gratification of your Will to Power. Here a dual principle is invoked: first, that what moralists have pusillanimously called “evil” is just as necessary a factor in evolution as what they have called “good”; second, that “good” and “evil” are mere question-begging terms, cunningly employed by groups of men in order to prejudice other groups of men whose Will to Power runs counter to their own. The following are a few of the numberless passages in which these ideas are developed:

Hatred, mischievousness, rapacity, love of domination, and whatever else is called evil, belongs to the astounding economy of race-conservation—a costly, wasteful, very foolish economy, indeed, but *demonstrably* one which has hitherto conserved our species (*The Joyful Wisdom*, 1).

According to this [the English] theory, the term “good” is applied to whatever tends to race-conservation, the term “evil” to whatever tends in the opposite direction. But in truth the evil impulses are just as expedient, race-conserving, and indispensable as the good—only their method of action is different (*The Joyful Wisdom*, 4).

It may seem incredible that such transparent sophistries should for a moment impose on intelligent people; but that they have done and still do so is unfortunately beyond dispute. The idea is expanded in the following passages:

We . . . believe that [man's] Will to Life had to be intensified into unconditioned Will to Power: We hold that hardness, violence, slavery, danger in the street, and in the heart, secrecy, stoicism, arts of temptation, and devilry of all kinds: that everything evil, terrible, tyrannical, wild-beast-like and serpent-like in man, contributes to the elevation of the species "man," just as much as its opposite—and in saying this we do not even say enough (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 44).

To refrain from mutual injury, from violence, from exploitation, to reduce one's will to a level with that of others; this may, in a certain rough sense, be reckoned as good conduct between individuals when the necessary conditions are present (that is to say, an actual similarity in strength and worth, and a participation in some common citizenship). But as soon as an attempt is made to carry this principle further, and even to find in it *the fundamental principle of society*, it discloses itself as what it is—namely, a Will to the *denial* of life, a principle of dissolution and decay. Here one must . . . resist all sentimental weakness: life is *in its essence* appropriation, injury, the overpowering of whatever is foreign to us and weaker than ourselves, suppression, hardness, the forcing upon others of our own forms, the incorporation of others, or, at the very least and mildest, their exploitation (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 259).

If these reflections had been jotted on the tablets of a philosophic Tartar in the camp of Tamburlaine they need have occasioned no surprise; but in fact they are addressed by an ex-professor of philology, at the end of the nineteenth century, to a people which boasts itself the most cultured in the world. Is it possible to ignore the direct relation between them and the bludgeoning of Belgium, to look no farther in the German programme? How many Germans, I wonder, have soothed the pricks of conscience with this satanic optimism, and told themselves that Belgium's path to heaven lay through the raptures (*Wollust*) of Louvain, Malines, and Aerschot? That Nietzsche was sincere, in his brain-sick fashion, there can be no doubt; but the moment you think of applying such principles in justification of actual deeds of brutality they have a sickening air of cant whereof one would imagine that even the German mind could not be wholly unconscious.

Now for a passage in which it is proved that "good" and "evil" are exactly the same thing, viewed from the standpoint

of masters and slaves, respectively, the "evil" of the humble and downtrodden being the "good" of the proud and domineering:

How different is the sense of the two words "bad" (*schlecht*) and "evil" (*böse*)! They are both apparently opposed to the same idea, "good"; but *not* to the same conception of good. Let us ask ourselves who is actually the "evil" man, from the point of view of the resentment morality [the morality of the slaves]? To answer in all strictness: it is precisely the "good" man of the other morality, precisely the noble, the powerful, the dominating man, but reversely colored, reversely interpreted, reversely regarded by the envenomed eye of resentment. Let us in no wise deny that he who learns to know these "good" men only as enemies learns to know only *evil enemies*. Those very men who are so strictly kept within bounds by good manners, respect, usage, gratitude, and still more by mutual watchfulness, by jealousy *inter pares*, who, moreover, in their behavior to one another show themselves so inventive in consideration, self-control, delicacy, loyalty, pride and friendship—those very men are to the outside world, to things foreign and to foreign countries, little better than so many uncaged beasts of prey. Here they enjoy liberty from all social restraint, . . . they revert to the beast of prey's innocence of conscience, and become rejoicing monsters, who perhaps go on their way, after a hideous sequence of murder, conflagration, violation, torture, with as much gaiety and equanimity as if they had merely taken part in some student gambols. . . . Deep in the nature of all these noble races there lurks unmistakably the beast of prey, the *blond beast*, lustfully roving in search of booty and victory. From time to time the beast demands an outlet, an escape, a return to the wilderness (*Genealogy of Morals*, I., 11).

One cannot but conceive that the German Nietzschean of to-day must find this passage a little inconveniently frank, and must wish that the master had not been quite so explicit on the subject of the "blond beast." As for the non-Nietzschean, who argues *a priori* that the German army cannot have been guilty of barbarous excesses, because it contains a large percentage of cultured and kindly men to whom brutality is odious, they must surely feel some slight uneasiness when it is pointed out that the popular philosopher of the day, the man whose works the cultured soldier carries in his knapsack, sets it down as a characteristic of the victorious and "dominating" warrior that he should regard murder, violation, and torture as "student gambols." If it be said that such writing is not sane, and cannot be seriously accepted by sane men as a rule of conduct, I agree to the first proposition, but demur to the second. This

philosophy of the aristocratic "blond beast" is quite seriously regarded as an epoch-making revelation by men who (though I should be sorry to guarantee the quality of their intelligence) cannot be set down as positively insane.

Let us look, now, at some other characteristics of the aristocratic race, for whose sake the world exists—the soil from which the Superman is, in the fullness of time, to spring:

The essential point in a good and healthy aristocracy is that it shall *not* regard itself as a function (whether of the kingship or of the commonwealth) but as their *meaning* and highest justification—that it should therefore accept with a good conscience the sacrifice of untold numbers of men and women, who *for its sake* must be depressed and reduced to imperfect human beings, to slaves, to instruments. Its fundamental belief must be precisely that society ought *not* to exist for its own sake, but only as a basis and scaffolding on which a selected race of beings may be able to elevate themselves to their higher mission, and in general to a higher *existence* (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 258).

The noble type of man feels *himself* to be the determiner of values; he looks for no approval from others, but takes his stand on the judgment, "What is hurtful to me is hurtful in itself"; he knows it to be his prerogative to confer honor on things, to be a *creator of values*. . . . A ruling-class morality is, however, particularly strange and disagreeable to the prevailing taste of the day, by reason of the sternness of its principle that one has duties only to one's equals: that one may act toward beings of a lower order, and toward everything that is foreign, just as seems good to one . . . and in any case "beyond good and evil" (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 260).

If we did not know that this was written more than a quarter of a century ago, might we not suppose it a fresh-coined paradox designed to justify retrospectively the Prussian policy of 1914? The great German State "has duties only to its equals"; but as it has no equals, it follows that it has no duties. Especially to Belgium, a "foreign" State "of a lower order," it is more than justified in behaving with a total disregard of moral prejudices. If the philosophical education of that hapless little country had not been neglected she would have bethought her of the following "principle," and let Germany trample over her unopposed:

At risk of wounding innocent ears, I lay down the principle that egoism is of the essence of the noble soul. I mean the immovable belief that to a being such as "we are" other beings are by nature subject, and are bound to sacrifice themselves (*Beyond Good and Evil*, 265).



Belgium ought to have felt honored by the opportunity of effacing herself at the command of the "noble" German egoism; but, alas! her pitiful "slave morality" prompted her to die rather than renounce her rights and obligations at the nod of the "blond beast, lustfully roving in search of booty and victory." In another place Nietzsche provides us with a still more striking image for the German spirit of domination. If Belgium had only kept the following pretty little fable before her eyes, she might have been more amenable to reason:

That the lambs should bear a grudge against the great birds of prey is in no way surprising; but that is no reason why we should blame the great birds of prey for picking up the little lambs. And if the lambs say among themselves, "These birds of prey are evil; and whoso is as unlike as possible to a bird of prey, and as like as possible to its opposite, a lamb—shall we not call him good?" One can have no objection to the setting up of such an ideal, except that the birds of prey are likely to regard it rather mockingly, and say, "We bear no grudge against these good lambs; on the contrary, we love them—for nothing is more to our taste than a tender lamb." To demand of strength that it should *not* manifest itself as strength, that it should *not* be a will for overcoming, for overthrowing, for mastery, a thirst for enemies and struggles and triumphs, is as absurd as to demand of weakness that it should manifest itself as strength (*Genealogy of Morals*, I., 13).

If Nietzsche were now alive, would he, I wonder, have sufficient detachment of spirit to realize that recent events have falsified his last illustration, and shown that there is nothing absurd in the idea of weakness manifesting itself as strength? What else has Belgium done? Her weakness has been transmuted into strength by the power of a heroic spirit and an intense indignation. By any standard not purely material and mechanical, it is Belgium, not Germany, that is to-day the "noble," the "aristocrat," the "creator of values."

As for general exhortations to war and denunciations of the spirit of pity, of humanity, of gentleness, of justice, it is difficult to select from their abundance. Here is a prophecy the fulfilment of which Germany is obediently endeavoring to bring about, though we trust she may be ultimately baffled:

We owe it to Napoleon . . . that several warlike centuries, unexampled in history, are now likely to follow one another, in short, that we have entered upon *the classical age of war*, of scientific and yet popular war on the grandest scale . . . to which all coming millenniums will look back with envy and reverence, as to an ideal realized (*The Joyful Wisdom*, 362).

The same ideas inspire the following passage, which contains the most famous, and, indeed, the finest, of all Nietzsche's maxims:

I rejoice in all signs that a more manly, more warlike age is beginning, which will, before all things, bring bravery once more into repute! For it must prepare the way for a still loftier age, and store up the forces necessary to it—that age which shall carry heroism into the domain of knowledge, and *wage wars* on behalf of ideas and their consequences. . . . Believe me, the secret of extracting the greatest profit and enjoyment from existence is this: *live dangerously!* Build your cities on Vesuvius! Launch your ships on uncharted seas! Live at war with your equals and with yourselves! Be robbers and conquerors, ye enlightened ones, so long as ye cannot be rulers and possessors (*The Joyful Wisdom*, 283).

Apart from its context, the exhortation to “live dangerously” sounds generous and noble. It is indeed the finer sort of men who love “the bright face of danger,” and choose for themselves the tasks, duties, and adventures from which those of softer fiber shrink. Life is full of opportunities for this type of man to enjoy the exhilaration of peril, either in the service of others or, at all events, under conditions which involve neither tyranny nor cruelty. But how the splendor of the saying fades when we find that it is not the danger of the lifeboat-man, the explorer, the mountaineer, that Nietzsche has in mind, but the danger of the bully and the bravo! It is not by preserving others from danger, but by inflicting it on them (of course with injustice, rapine, and cruelty in its train) that the adept of this gospel is to “extract the greatest profit and enjoyment from existence.”

The reader may possibly feel that such passages cannot have been intended to be read literally—that they must be taken as figurative utterances, having reference to some spiritual plane of existence on which robbery and conquest, rapine and cruelty, mean something very different from what they mean on the common earth. It is true that Nietzsche mixes up the literal and the figurative in the most reckless way. In many of his most characteristic outpourings he himself would probably have been at a loss to tell whether he meant what he said or something quite different. It is unfortunate that, during his lifetime, criticism simply ignored his writings, and no attempt was made to cross-examine him, to pin him down to definite meanings, to confront him with the consequences of his doctrines, if read in their plain and obvious sense. He enjoyed the irresponsibility

conferred by neglect; and this is precisely what renders his "aphorisms" so dangerous. Literally interpreted, they would lead straight back to chaos; even his most ardent disciples must, at many points, read him in a figurative sense; but they are perfectly free to take his words literally whenever it suits them—as Germany is doing at the present moment.

Such an ambiguity encounters us in the following famous passage:

My brethren in war! I love you from my heart's heart. . . . Therefore let me tell you the truth!

I know the hate and envy of your heart. Ye are not great enough not to know hate and envy. Then be great enough not to be ashamed of them.

Ye shall be of those whose eye is ever seeking an enemy—*your* enemy. And some of you know hatred at first sight.

Ye shall seek your enemy, ye shall wage your war, and wage it for your thoughts. And, if your thought be overthrown, your honesty shall none the less shout victory!

Ye shall love peace as a means to new wars. And the short peace better than the long.

I do not counsel you to work, but to fight. I do not counsel you to peace, but to conquest. Let your work be a battle, your peace a victory.

Ye say a good cause will hallow even war? I say unto you it is the good war that halloweth every cause (*Zarathustra*: "Of War and Warriors").

One of these verses (the fourth) may at a pinch be read as referring to intellectual rather than physical conflicts. It must be in a war of ideas, not in a struggle for material advantage, that the vanquished is adjured to shout, "Victory!"—that is, to admit that truth has triumphed, though he himself be overthrown.<sup>1</sup> But though this verse is, strictly speaking, irreconcilable with the idea of strife in its literal, physical sense, the whole passage has always been, and cannot but be, interpreted as a eulogy of war precisely as it is waged by the Prussian General Staff.

The ambiguity, nay, contradiction, in the terms of this passage is only an example of Nietzsche's intellectual unscrupulousness.

<sup>1</sup> It may be said that this interpretation is inconsistent with Nietzsche's general attitude toward the concept "truth." But in what other sense are we to read the passage? Thought can only be overthrown by more valid thought; and is not validity the Nietzschean test of truth?

Finally, that our suffragist friends may be in no doubt as to what awaits them if the spirit of Nietzsche wins in this war, let me remind them of the following oft-quoted texts:

Man shall be trained for war, and woman for the solace of the warrior. Everything else is folly.

Thou goest to women? Forget not thy whip (*Zarathustra*: "Of Old and Young Womankind").

## II

I submit that, when a body of doctrine is known to have countless adherents in the country of its origin, and when the political and military conduct of the country is found to be in every detail exactly consonant with that doctrine, we cannot possibly resist the conclusion that it is one of the factors which render such conduct possible. In this case, as I have already suggested, it is a symptom as well as a cause. Nietzsche certainly did not beget the German frame of mind. But what can be more evident than that he has fomented and stimulated it, providing it with a philosophic background, and bringing Prussian Junkerdom into line with a congenially swaggering theory of the universe? He has hitched Mark Brandenburg to the stars in their courses.

What, then, are we to say of this philosophy? Is it a sane, a wholesome, a tenable theory of life? Is it desirable that the world of the future should be shaped in accordance with its dictates?

Let us first note that it is, above everything, a temperament-philosophy, a transcript of character. Henrik Ibsen, in a well-known epigramme, has said, "To poetize [*dichten*] is to hold judgment-day upon oneself." Nietzsche, on the other hand, might have said, "To philosophize is to effect one's own apotheosis." He admits as much, in more than one passage, saying, for example, "The greater part of the conscious thinking of a philosopher is secretly influenced by his instincts."

Now the determining factor in Nietzsche's mental habit is certainly to be found in his persistent ill-health. From early manhood onward he was a chronic sufferer, with only occasional intervals of tolerable bodily comfort. A doctor, seeking to prove that the root of his malady was neglected eye-strain, has drawn up, from his correspondence and other sources, an appalling catalogue of his illnesses. One of his most frequent

afflictions was violent headache, with vomiting, which used often to last for many days on end. Those of us who are at all subject to sick headache know that a few hours of it are sufficient to bring us to the verge of suicide, and that two or three recurrences of it a year are a serious trial to an otherwise healthy man. There were long periods in Nietzsche's life when his days of anguish seem to have outnumbered his days of comparative ease. It is to me incredible that these persistent headaches were not premonitions of his ultimate insanity. His father died insane; and though an attempt is made to attribute his breakdown entirely to some accidental lesion, the coincidence is, to say the least of it, curious. But, putting aside the question of mental disease, we are certainly entitled to say that a man who was such a martyr to physical disease in the region of the brain was unlikely to take a very normal and healthy view of life. His mental attitude could not but be in some measure warped.

And warped it was, in a curious but quite comprehensible way. Nietzsche, like Robert Louis Stevenson—an almost exact contemporary who probably never heard of him—was driven by reaction against his bodily frailties into an imaginery attitude of aggressive robustness, of overpowering health, of ostentatious virility. Both men were in reality very brave, very stoical; and as Nietzsche's maladies seem to have been more painful, more depressing, than Stevenson's, his is perhaps the greater merit. But in both men the effort to react against what Cassius calls "accidental evils" led to a certain loss of equilibrium and over-emphasis of fortitude. In Stevenson's case the lack of balance was very slight, and tended to disappear as time went on. It is only in his early years that we find him a little shrill in his praises of the world as a "brave gymnasium," full of matchless opportunities for "sea-bathing and horse-riding and bracing manly virtue." It was only to such innocent exaggerations that his wholesome and kindly spirit was at any time prone. But in Nietzsche's congenitally irritable, arrogant, atrabilious nature the effort "to keep a stiff upper lip" led to far other and uglier excesses. The supersensitive, quivering little invalid, who could never even find a woman willing to marry him, constructed for himself an ideal entity, physically his opposite, spiritually his counterpart—the great "blond beast," the human bird of prey, the conqueror, the destroyer, the slave-driver, the despiser of "herd morality." And to the stridulous persistence with which he preached this ideal there

can be little doubt that his countrymen's stolid neglect of his writings contributed. They fell still-born from the press, until at last he had to break in upon his own scanty capital in order to pay for the printing of them. Tragic indeed is the tale of his struggle against chilling indifference—it might well have embittered an originally sweeter nature. The enthusiastic friendships of his youth cooled and flickered out. In the end Zarathustra had but one faithful disciple, though his last twenty years of sanity were brightened by recognition from Taine in France and George Brandes in Denmark. There have been few unhappier men than this lonely, unappreciated, jaundiced genius, wandering from third-rate pension to pension, in search of a little sunshine and health. But his pride forbade him to give in and "say Nay" to life. He felt that an invalid had no right to be a pessimist.

Under the bludgeonings of chance,  
His head was bloody, but unbowed.

He took revenge on the world as he knew it by constructing one in which all the impulses, balked in his own nature, should have free and unbridled course. One cannot read him without feeling that he was not so unhappy, after all, since, in penning his ruthless paragraphs, he enjoyed ecstasies of that wild-beast-like destructiveness which was an essential part of his ideal.

Docked of its wantonness and virulence of expression, his philosophy is at many points acceptable enough. The Will to Power does not perceptibly differ from the Will to Live, or, if it does, it differs for the worse, as being a less universal concept. No one doubts the relativity of ethical standards or the need of a transvaluation of many of our values, though Nietzsche himself would surely have admitted fortitude to be a tolerably permanent virtue, while it is hard to imagine a transvaluation which should make temperance (for example) a vice. The Superman, reasonably interpreted, becomes an innocent eugenic ideal. What Nietzsche actually meant by him will for ever remain doubtful. Sometimes he writes of him as an individual—as though all the groaning and travail of creation had no end save the production of a single super-Napoleon. At other times (more sanely) he uses Superman as a collective term for a breed or caste, a highly developed variety of the genus "blond beast," which, as he shrewdly conjectures, will very much resemble what the common man of to-day would describe as a legion of devils. But in this diabolism there is a touch of grim

humor, a half-confessed mischievousness, and desire to "*épater le bourgeois*." So far as his practical recipes for the reproduction of the Superman go, they are little more than eugenic common-places.

The really noxious feature of Nietzsche's philosophy—apart from its general inhumanity of temper—is the division of mankind into masters and slaves, and the assertion that this is a desirable arrangement, conducive to the perfecting of the race. There may be some historical truth (along with much exaggeration) in the assignment of certain moral concepts to "master morality" and "slave morality," respectively. Over this contribution to the "genealogy of morals" it is needless to quarrel. But to make the enslavement of the mass of humanity the fundamental requisite for an ideal (and apparently rigid, static, undeveloping) social State, was to supply aristocratic, plutocratic, and especially military arrogance with a pseudo-philosophic catchword that lends itself to the most hideous abuse. Very naturally it is this "stupendous addition to human knowledge" (as an English disciple calls it) upon which all the little Nietzsches of his following, who cultivate his insolence without a trace of his talent, fasten with parrot-cries of delight. They may not be exactly Superman, for the production of that glorious race is to be a matter of time, but they can here and now rank themselves on the side of the Masters, and condemn the herd. It needs no profound acquaintance with the literature inspired by Nietzsche to realize that he has at least succeeded in begetting a flourishing brood of super-snobs. Nor is it doubtful that these energumens abound in the high places of Pan-Germanism—military, political, and journalistic. Does not Nietzsche speak in every line of the following effusion by Herr K. F. Wolff, in *Pan-Germanische Blätter* for September last?<sup>1</sup>

There are two kinds of races, master races and inferior races. Political rights belong to the master race alone, and can only be won by war. This is a scientific law, a law of biology. . . . It is *unjust* that a rapidly increasing master race should be struggling for room behind its own frontier, while a declining inferior race can stretch its limbs at ease on the other side of that frontier. The inferior race will not be educated in the schools of the master race, nor will any school be established for it, nor will its language be employed in public. (Should it rebel,) it is necessary to use the most violent means to crush such insurrection, and not to encumber the prisons afterward. Thus the conquerors can best work for the annihilation of the conquered,

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by Mr. C. R. L. Fletcher in *Oxford Pamphlets*.

and break for ever with the prejudice which would claim for a beaten race any right to maintain its nationality or its native tongue.

Here we see an easy but very significant transition has been effected. Nietzsche knew nothing of any master nation existing in the world to-day. His doctrine was that within all nations there was a master aristocracy, and a "herd" living in more or less disguised slavery. But Herr Wolff gaily transfers the "Master" quality from individuals to a whole nation—the Germans—and the slave quality to a whole nation, manifestly the French, who have no right to "stretch their limbs at ease on the other side of their frontier." This is, of course, a misreading of Nietzsche, but it is a misreading to which he lends himself only too readily, and there is every reason to believe that it is a misreading very widely accepted in Germany.

That Nietzsche was a man of genius there is no doubt. He had flashes of amazing lucidity. He had a disintegrating intellect of such abnormal power that at last it disintegrated itself. To his mastery of language German testimony is unanimous, though an English reader is apt to find more than a touch of the falsetto in his constant underscorings<sup>1</sup> and points of exclamation. But one gift he never possessed—a gift most essential to the man who aspires to shape the spiritual life of the future—the gift of sanity. It is for specialists to determine at what stage of his career definite mental disease set in; for us it is enough to note that at no time after 1870 can he be said to have possessed either a sound body or a sound mind. His attitude to life is thoroughly morbid, his reading of its laws essentially mad; and his mad philosophy was at once an effect and a very potent cause of that German madness which is convulsing the world.

What a calamity that this national aberration should have found a man of sympathetically aberrant genius to interpret and intensify it! In a very real sense it is the philosophy of Nietzsche that we are fighting.

<sup>1</sup> It must be admitted that spaced words in German are rather less emphatic than our italicized words.

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